

THINGS TO BE REMEMBERED**NO. 3347****A SERMON****PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 1913****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON***“A psalm of David to bring to remembrance.”**Psalm 38 (Title)*

THESE words form the title to the psalm before us, which we read just now in your hearing. Let us note, for a short time, the subjects which David thought it necessary to bring to remembrance. We must all have noticed that our memories much more readily retain evil than good. The snatch of a profane song heard in childhood will remain with us to our graves, while many a holy thought leaves scarcely an impression upon the tablets of memory. We heard it—it is gone—it would be difficult to recall it.

The draft that flows down the rivers of Sodom one retentively collects, but the goodly cedars of Lebanon that are floated down the stream pass by unheeded. We may well say, “Forget not all his benefits,” for, alas! while the multitude of God’s benefits is forgotten, if there be anything to murmur at, it is pretty sure to be treasured up, as though it were a priceless relic to be carefully preserved.

May the Lord mend our memories. As He makes us new men in Christ Jesus, may the Holy Spirit give to our memories the power to grip the right and the true, and with a loose hand to let slip that which is evil and contrary to His rule.

The psalm is “to bring to remembrance.” This seems to teach us that good things need to be kept alive in our memories, that we should often sit down, look back, retrace, and turn over in our meditation things that are past, lest, at any time we should let any good thing sink into oblivion. I have read the psalm to you, and I think you will all agree with me that among the things which David brought to his own remembrance, the first and foremost were—

I. HIS PAST TRIALS AND HIS PAST DELIVERANCES.

Come, my brethren, let me stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. Let me remind you of your past battles and victories, of your troubles and conflicts, and your sweet cheer and safe preservation. It will do you good to remember them—*such a remembrance will prevent your imagining that you have come into the land of ease and perfect rest.*

We may have our time of prosperity and say with David, “I shall never be moved. LORD, by thy favor, thou hast made my mountain to stand strong.” But soon adversity surprises us, as it suddenly overtook him and changed his note, “Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled.”

This is not the place for us to have peace and rest. We are as yet at sea—the vessel has not reached the port. We are as yet in the wilderness—we have not come to the goodly land even to Canaan. We are not yet out of gunshot of the devil. We are not yet beyond afflictions and trials, and if for awhile the weather has been calm and the sun has been bright, and we poor pilgrims have been trudging on along green pastures and by the side of still waters, let us remember the giants with whom we fought in days long gone. Let us remember the hills of difficulty, the valleys of humiliation, the conflicts with Apollyon—for as it was at the first, so shall it be ever till we come to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Oh! you who are making for yourself a downy nest and building up a castle in the air, remember you do this without the permit of your God. Nay, you do it in the teeth of His warnings, for has not Jesus said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation,” and is it not written, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous”? Bring to remembrance, then, your former struggles lest you begin to settle upon your lees and fancy that there is no more trial for you.

Remember them, too, *because they will refresh your memories with regard to the mercy of God and so will stir you up to gratitude.* Oh! we thought when we were in trouble that if the Lord would vouchsafe deliverance, He would never hear the last of it. We said to ourselves, “I will praise Him while I have any being if He bring me out of this strait and set my feet once again in a large room.” But our song was not quite so long as we expected, and after having praised God a little the novelty of the mercy departed, and our gratitude subsided.

But oh! my brethren and sisters, have we not much cause to bless God? Have we not cause to bless Him that we have been delivered from the burden of guilt—a burden that once bowed us to the earth—that we have been saved in dire afflictions when it seemed as if we must be crushed, that tribulations have been averted which threatened us, or that we have been sustained under those which have actually come upon us?

Oh! sing unto the Lord a new song and weave that new song out of the remembrances of His past mercies, when He appeared for His servants in the times of trouble and wrought for them strangely according to the counsels of His love. Blessed be the name of the Lord at this time as we bring to remembrance trials past and mercies that have been received!

Such a remembrance will be of great service to you, my brethren, *if you are at this time enduring the like exercises.* What God was, that He is. “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” is His people’s trust and glory. Having begun to deliver you, He will not afterwards forsake you. He has not brought you thus far to put you to shame.

What is the trouble of today? You have passed through another quite as great. What is the doubt that assails you? You have already met a doubt quite as gloomy and by faith you have overcome it. What is the fear which now gathers like a heavy cloud? The time before, it burst with mercies upon your head, and it shall do the same again. Draw courage from the recollections of the past and go forward to the fears of the future, and they shall vanish as you advance, confident in your God.

The great point, however, in David’s psalm is—

II. TO BRING TO REMEMBRANCE THE DEPRAVITY OF OUR NATURE.

There, perhaps, is no psalm which more fully than this, describes human nature as seen in the light which God the Holy Ghost casts upon it in the time when He convinces us of sin. I am persuaded that the description here does not tally with any known disease of the body. It is very much like leprosy, but it has about it certain features which cannot be found to meet in any leprosy described either by ancient or modern writers.

The fact is, it is a *spiritual* leprosy—it is an inward disease which is here described—and David paints it to the very life and he would have us recollect this. Child of God, let me bring to your remembrance tonight the fact that you are by nature no better than the vilest of the vile. “Children of wrath even as others,” are we. Even you who are favored by divine grace to enter into rich fellowship with Christ are no better naturally than the lost spirits in hell.

There was no difference at birth, and no intrinsic essential difference of moral constitution between Peter and Judas, between Paul and Demas, between the brightest apostle and the bloodiest persecutor. We have grown in grace—had we been left to ourselves, we would have rotted in sin. We have gone from strength to strength in the way of holiness, but if it had not been for grace that interposed most sovereignly, we would have gone from depth to depth in the way of crime.

Just turn that over for a minute. By nature not one whit better than the rest of mankind, see what grace has done for you in making such a difference. Why are you not tonight upon the drunkard’s bench? Why fill you not the seat of the scorner? Perhaps you have been there already, and if grace had not prevented, you would have continued there.

I think it does us a world of good, when grace has made the difference, still to take the place which the publican did. I never feel so well in spiritual health as when I cry out, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Somehow there is a safeness about it, when a sense of sin makes one cling to the sinner’s Savior. Growth in grace and high frames in spirituality are very pleasant, but it does us so much good

every now and then to come right on the ground again, flat on our face before the Lord, crying out, "What am I that Thou hast brought me to this? God forgive me, and accept me through the precious blood, for in myself I am loathsome, vile, and abhorred, and in me there dwells no good thing." The best mode of living is to live upon Christ every day as you did the first day of your conversion—always to stand at the foot of the cross with—

*"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling."*

A saint, I hope, by grace, but a sinner certainly by nature. Still, still dependent upon the same merit of the Substitute, still accepted through the continual plea of the divine Intercessor who has espoused my cause and is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. "Heirs of wrath even as others"—this is what we were. Sinners saved by grace—this is what we are.

It is well to bring to the remembrance of the child of God that, although his past sin is all blotted out, and he is justified by faith which is in Jesus Christ, yet there still remains in him the old body of this death. Sin, the force of sin, still dwells in him.

Now, brethren, there are times when everything goes very smoothly with us. Everybody treats us kindly. We are much in religious exercises. We go from prayer meetings to lectures, from lectures to sermons, and from sermons to our room, and to our Bibles. We do not get vexed or troubled, and we begin to think, "Now, I really am somewhat of a superior being. I think I am not what I used to be. I never could be roused to that old anger which once flamed out so furiously, nor could I now be led into such fretfulness as once was wont to overcome me."

I have noticed—take my experience for what it is worth—that the most dangerous time in the Christian's life is when he has been nearest to God in devotion. Outside the church, you meet the devil, and not expecting him, he is too much for you. It is just when you have been most spiritual that the temptation which you had almost thought would never come again, trips you up, and ah! how soon you find that if, when upon the mountain, your face glowed, down in the valley again, unless your Master hold you up, your feet will slip and your face will be covered with the filthiness of the valley!

Remember, child of God, let others say what they will to you, that the dictates of experience and the teachings of God's Word, lead you to the remembrance that there is in you still a spirit that lusts after all manner of evil, a nature which, if it were not curbed and confined by the grace of God, would make you again to be what you were, yea, and would bring into your house seven devils worse than the first.

Never conceive that any one of the evils of your nature is so dead that it cannot have a resurrection. Strive against every form of sin, every thought of sin, every carnal tendency, every evil passion, but when you have striven most, never count your victory to be complete, until your feet are within the pearly gate. Never reckon that you may take off your helmet, and lay aside your sword, and say, "The battle is fairly won," until you have crossed the river of death and go waving the banner of love in the streets of the New Jerusalem.

David brings this to remembrance and that, too, in the most forcible words. Some of the children of God can use very terrible words about what they feel in their own nature, so that ungodly men say of them, "How bad these Christians must be!" It is not that they are worse than others, but that they have the sense to see the evil. A man in a black coat may have a hundred spots and blots upon it, but nobody will see them—but let him wear a coat of white and if there be never so little a speck of mire, it is straightway perceived.

The holier the Christian becomes, the more readily he perceives his imperfections and the wickedness of his sins—and sin, instead of becoming more bearable to a Christian, becomes growingly more and more intolerable. A man in the water may bear much—in fact, much of it might roll over his head and he would not feel the weight of it—but let him come out on the dry land, and put but a small quantity of water in a bucket, and how heavy it is when he carries it upon his head. When he is in the

element, he does not feel the weight, for it presses him on all sides—but get him out of the element, and then he begins to feel its gravity.

So, a sinner in his sin is like a man in the deep—he does not feel the weight of his sin. But get him out of it, bring him into a new element, and then straightway sin becomes exceeding sinful. Oh! if we could but be perfect! If it were possible to be rid of this evil nature! So we sigh, and so we cry, waiting for the adoption, for the coming of the Lord, for the perfecting of our nature, as it shall be by and by, when the furnace work of Providence and the refining work of grace shall all be done.

It is a gloomy thing to bring to your remembrance, my dear friends, but it is often brought to mine, and I know it is good for me—what you were by nature, and what you still are, unless the grace of God prevent it. Remember old John Bradford's remark, whenever he saw a man go by his window to Tyburn to be hanged—and he lived at that time where he saw them all—"Ah!" he said, "there goes John Bradford if the grace of God had not prevented."

It is said that a Scotchman once went to see Rowland Hill, and sitting down, he looked at the lines in his face. He looked a long while, till Rowland smilingly said, "And what are you looking at, my friend?" "I am looking at the lines in your face, Mr. Hill." "And what," said he, "do you make of them?" "Why, that if the grace of God had not saved you, you would have been a great rogue." "Ah," said Rowly "and you have hit the mark."

It is even so, and even worse than that, if the grace of God had not come into our hearts and made new creatures of us, we had been equal to the devil, or at any rate, it would not have been our fault if we had not excelled even Apollyon himself in rebellion and enmity to God.

A third thing the psalm brings to our remembrance is—

III. OUR MANY ENEMIES.

David says that his enemies laid snares for him, and sought his hurt, and spoke mischievous things, and devised and imagined deceits all day long. "Well," says one, "how was it that David had so many enemies? How could he make so many? Must he not have been imprudent and rash, or perhaps, morose?" It does not appear so in his life. He rather made enemies by his being scrupulously holy. His enemies attacked him not because he was wicked, but as he says in this very psalm, they were his enemies because he loved the thing which is good.

Now, you must not suppose that because you seek to live in all peaceableness and righteousness, that therefore everybody will be peaceable towards you. Far from it. Our Lord put us upon the right tack when He said, "I came not to send peace upon earth, but a sword." The ultimate result of the religion of Christ is to make peace everywhere, but the first result is to cause strife.

When the light comes, it must contend with the darkness. When the truth comes, it must first combat error. And when the Gospel comes, it must meet with enemies—and the man who receives the Gospel will find that his foes shall be they of his own household. You shall not be helped by an ungodly father, nor be cheered onward by an un-Christian mother. One would think that even nature itself might lead parents to admire that which should make their children virtuous, preserve them in this life, and bless them in the life to come.

But such is the enmity of the human heart against Christ and His Gospel, that hundreds of parents have been monsters to their children when those children have been obedient subjects to Christ. Why those stakes, those dungeons, and those racks? Why the snows of Piedmont dyed scarlet with human gore? Why the glens of Scotland marked with the lurking places of the saints?

Because this world hates the people of God. "Ye are not of the world," says Christ, "even as I am not of the world, and therefore the world hateth you." It is good to be reminded of this, that we may not be astonished at the fiery trial as though some strange thing had happened to us. It is the part and lot of the follower of the true to have to contend with deadly odds.

And remember, Christian, you have enemies who seek to turn you aside and do you mischief. You are not now traveling along a road that is safe for your feet, in which there is no enemy whatsoever, but behind every hedge there lurks a foe. Whether you are in high or low estate, temptation will assail you.

It is not possible for you to shut the door so fast as to shut out temptations to sin. Snares assail you in your bed and at your table—snares will be about your feet at home and abroad, with your fellow workmen, and in the bosom of your family.

Be always on the alert then. Travel with a naked sword—never sheath it. “Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation,” and until you have come out of the enemy’s country, into the land that flows with milk and honey, ever hear your Captain say, “What I say unto you I say unto all—watch.” Watch—especially watch against those who come to you with words softer than butter, which inwardly are drawn swords.

Watch against temptations that appeal to your pleasure. You need not be so much afraid of that which grieves you as of that which charms you. Watch against the fair siren whose fascinating song will attract you from the billowy deep with the hope of rest to where, alas! you will find shipwreck and ruin. Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it moves itself aright. Let the charm of the temptation be the warning to you. Let the pleasure be the very beacon which shall make you turn aside from it, feeling that there must be evil lurking there. Christian, be always on your guard. Never be taken by surprise.

Once more—

IV. THE PSALM REMINDS US OF OUR GRACIOUS GOD.

Anything which drives us to God is a blessing and anything which weans us from leaning on an arm of flesh, and especially that weans us from trying to stand alone, is a boon to us. Think awhile how much you owe to the grace of God who has preserved you until now. The man who carries a bombshell within his heart, and has to walk through the midst of sparks, may wonder that he has not been blown to pieces.

*“Kept alive with death so near,
I to God the glory give.”*

With such a heart as mine, if You, O Lord, had not held me fast, I had long ago declined and turned back to the world. Praise the grace that has held you till now. Keep in remembrance the patience of God in enduring with you, the power of God in restraining you, the love of God in instructing you, and the goodness of God in keeping you to this day.

Nor ought we ever to forget with regard to our inward depravity and the grace of God, that mighty work which the Holy Spirit has undertaken. I was trying the other day in my own mind to weigh in the scales—the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit—and the only conclusion I could come to was this—that I did not know which in its execution was the more difficult, or which in its results was the more precious.

For Christ to take the guilt of sin and suffer was certainly a marvelous thing, but for the Holy Ghost to condescend to dwell in our hearts, and to combat day by day with our sin until He should eradicate the very principle of selfishness, and make us to be holy even as God is holy—this is a work worthy of God. And if the former work, that of Christ was divine, certainly this is not less so.

Oh! let us never depreciate the Holy Spirit’s work, but looking forward to what we are to be, as well as backwards upon what we were, let us magnify the Holy Ghost with our heart, and soul, and strength, who has wrought all our works in us, and by whom we shall be presented faultless before the presence of God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

“My God, I thank You for reminding me of Yourself, of Your Son by whom I am cleansed, of Your Holy Spirit by whom I am sanctified, of Yourself by whom I am daily succored. Oh! bind me to Yourself with tenfold cords, and as your providence brings me where I have to encounter new sins, and new trials, and to experience new deliverances, and new mercies, may Your own self be brought more closely to my soul, and may everything bring You to remembrance.”

We never walk so safely as when we walk with God. We are never so rich as when we are poor in everything without Him, and never so strong as when we are weakness itself, except for such strength as we get from our invisible Helper.

Lean heavily there, Christian. Lean heavily. You can never make that arm weak. Bear with all your weight—He can never tire. Cast all your burden upon Him. You may even be glad to have a burden to cast there, so that you may have opportunities of knowing and proving the power and faithfulness of your God.

Tonight, as your troubles have been brought to remembrance, let those bring your weakness to remembrance—let that bring your God to remembrance, and so do you go up the rounds of the ladder from the bottom of the horrible pit and of the miry clay, to the very heights of joy and gladness, and as you go say, “My God, You are mine—mine, despite my sin—mine to deliver me from it all and to make me like Yourself, to dwell with Yourself forever.”

Brethren and sisters, the mercy is that all the badness that we see in ourselves does not at all affect our standing before God or our belief in our own personal safety. Though I see within myself all that is foul and corrupt, everything that is villainous and even devilish, by nature, yet do I know that I am saved, and rejoice that neither death nor hell shall divide me from my Master’s bosom, for our standing rests not in ourselves, but wholly in what Christ has done.

His perfect work presents to us a foundation upon which we can build securely, and though we do grieve daily over indwelling sin and have come to God with many a bitter accusation against ourselves, yet glory be to His name, Christ changes not, and our acceptance in the Beloved does not wax and wane like the moon, but abides in one sacred, high, eternal noonday, never to go down. Glory be to God and let our souls exult in such mercy as this.

I would to God as I bring these things to your remembrance, that you would remember how many have forgotten these things all their lives. How many of your own companions live as if there were no God and no hereafter? I bring *them* to your remembrance. Pray for them and do what you can to lead them to Jesus.

I wish I could bring to *their* remembrance that they must die, and that after death there comes the judgment, and that the judgment for an unpardoned soul means eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord. Oh! you who have much remembrance for the things of this world that are not worth the recollecting, for awhile use that faculty for nobler ends.

Scrape not up the mire of the streets, but begin to gather a little of the pure gold that God puts before you. Think upon your latter end. Think upon the Gospel which now is preached to you. Think upon the time when it shall be preached to you no more. Think of the hour when you shall be called to account for having rejected the Gospel’s invitation. Whosoever trusts Jesus shall be saved. Rely upon what Jesus has done, and guilty as you are, your sins shall be forgiven.

God grant that it may be so with you, for His love’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ROMANS 6

Verse 1 *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

The fifth chapter ends up in this way, that “where sin abounded, etc....Jesus Christ our Lord.” Then he goes on to say, “What shall we say then?” What inference shall we draw from the fact that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound? Shall we be base enough to draw a wicked inference from a gracious statement? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

It is a horrible suggestion and yet it is one which has come into the minds of many men, for some men are bad enough for anything—they will curdle the sweet milk of love into the sourest argument for

sin. “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid.” With all the vehemence of his nature, he says—

2. *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

The grace of God makes us dead to sin. This is the grace of God, which delivers us from the power of evil, and if this be so, how can we live any longer therein?

3. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

If we are in Christ at all, we are partakers of His death, and as His was a death for sin and a death to sin, we are made partakers of it—we are really dead because Christ died, and we are in Him. Therefore we are dead to the old life, to the old way of sin. We signify that by our baptism.

4. *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Our baptism, solemn as it was, was a great acted falsehood, a living pretense, unless we are dead to our former way of living and have come to live unto God in a new life altogether, by virtue of the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

5. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.*

If we have partaken of His death, we partake also of His rising power. We live because He lives, and we live as He lives, not after the old manner, but in newness of life.

6. *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

We are to regard ourselves as persons that have been dead. We are ourselves, it is true, and yet in another sense we are not our own selves. We are not to look upon ourselves as though we owed any kind of service to the power which we obeyed before we knew the Lord. We are new people—we have a new life and have entered upon a new existence—the old man is crucified with Him

7-8. *For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him:*

There was no getting free from the power of sin, except by dying to it, but being dead to it, we are free from it, and now being dead that way, we have entered into a new life that we might live as Christ lives.

9. *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*

So we, being raised from our former death, shall die no more—death has no more dominion over us. That is to say, sin cannot reign in us again—we are dead to it, we are brought into a new life that can never end, even as our Lord Jesus Christ is. There is a parallel between us and Christ, even as there is a union between us.

10. *For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

And so do we. We have died unto sin once, but now that we live, we live unto God.

11-12. *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

It is in the body that it tries to reign. These poor things, these mortal frames of ours, have so many passions, so many desires, so many weaknesses, all of which are apt to bring us under the dominion of sin, unless we watch with great care.

13. *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin”—neither eyes, nor ears, nor hands, nor feet, neither suffer any of these to become the tools of sin, “but yield yourselves unto God.” He is ready to use you, lay all the powers of your nature out as tools for Him to use. “Yield

yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead.” He is not the God of the dead—He cannot use the dead, but He is the God of the living, and as you profess to have received a new life in Christ, yield up all the faculties of this new life unto the living God, “and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

14. *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

When you were under the law, sin did get dominion over you. That law which was ordained to life, worked towards death. The evil concupiscence of your nature revolted against the command and led you astray. But now, beloved, it is of love and grace, and now sin cannot get in—stronger motives shall hold you to holiness than ever held you before, and the grace of God itself, like a wall of fire, shall guard you from the dominion of sin.

15. *What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*

That must not be. Again the evil spirit crops up, trying to turn the grace of God into licentiousness, and to make us feel free to sin because of God’s love—that must not be.

16. *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

It is a wonderful heart-searching text, is this. Let us put ourselves under its power. Whatever you obey, that is your master. And if you obey the suggestions of sin, you are the slave of sin. And it is only as you are obedient to God that you are truly the servants of God. So that, after all, our outward walk and conversation are the best test of our true condition. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, nor can he have any reason to believe that he belongs to God.

17. *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

Or into which you were delivered. God has taken you, melted you down, and poured you into a new mold. God be thanked for that—you are not what you used to be. Although you are not what you hope to be, yet you have reason to bless God you are not what once you were—you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine into which you were delivered.

18. *Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*

The fetters are struck off, the lusts of the flesh do not hold us any longer. We are the Lord’s free men, and out of gratitude for this glorious freedom, we become the willing servants of the righteous God.

19. *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

It wants no explanation. In the days of our sin, we sinned with all our power. There was not one part of us but what became the willing servant of sin, and we went from iniquity into iniquity. And now the cross has made us entirely new and we have been melted down, poured out into a fresh mold. Now, let us yield every member of our body, soul, and spirit to righteousness, even unto holiness, till the whole of us, in the wholeness and consequently the holiness of our *nature*, shall be given unto God.

20. *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

You did not care about righteousness then. When you served sin, you felt it was utterly indifferent to you what the claims of righteousness might be. Well, now that you have become the servant of righteousness, be free from sin, let sin have no more dominion over you now, than righteousness used to have when you were the slaves of sin. “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?”

What profit did they ever bring you? There was a temporary delight, like the blossom on the tree in spring, but what fruit had you? Did it ever come to anything? Is there anything to look back upon with pleasure in a life of sin? Oh no, those things whereof we are now ashamed were fruitless to us, “for the end of those things is death.”

22-23. *But now being made free from sin, and being servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

ISAIAH 53

This is a chapter which you have read hundreds of times, perhaps, and I am sure it is one that needs no comment from me. I shall read it through with scarcely a sentence of comment.

Verses 1-9. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

A strange reason for making His grave with the wicked, and yet remember if it had not been that He had done no violence, He would not have been fit to be a substitute for sinners, and so He was numbered with transgressors to redeem men.

10-12. *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

How clearly you have before you here our blessed Redeemer, and how strong are the expressions used by Isaiah to set forth His substitution. If he did intend to teach us the doctrine that Christ suffered in the place and stead of His people, he could not have used more expressive words. And if he did not intend to teach us that truth, it is marvelous that he should have adopted a phraseology so likely to mislead.

Yes, we believe and hold it fast, that Christ did take the sins of His people verily and truly upon Himself, and did in proper person make a complete expiation for the guilt of all His chosen, and in this we find our hearts' best confidence—

*Our soul can on this doctrine live,
Can on this doctrine die."*

Have you and I an interest in this atonement, or must the complaint be made concerning us—"Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" While I was reading just now, could you say by faith, "Yes, surely He has borne *our* griefs and carried *our* sorrows"? Have you an appropriating faith which takes the sufferings of Christ to be its own? Do you now humbly, but yet confidently, look to Jesus Christ, the great Burden-Bearer on yonder tree, and know that your guilt was

there? If so, rejoice and walk worthily of your calling. If not, soul, you do not know the first letters of the alphabet of religion. May the Lord teach you, for His name's sake.

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